

VHMA 
Fall Conference
2008

Human Resources:
A Practical Approach
To Management

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Our Greatest Expense

As managers, our goal should be to build and maintain a well-trained, cohesive, accountable, cost-effective team of people to support the service goals of the practice.

The Conventional Human Resource Approach

Hiring in crisis mode / warm body

Job Descriptions may be there but if so are underutilized as a tool

Mediocre Training or sometimes no training

Evaluations that do not give employees goals and plans for improvement

Haphazard Discipline

Inconsistent Wage Scales

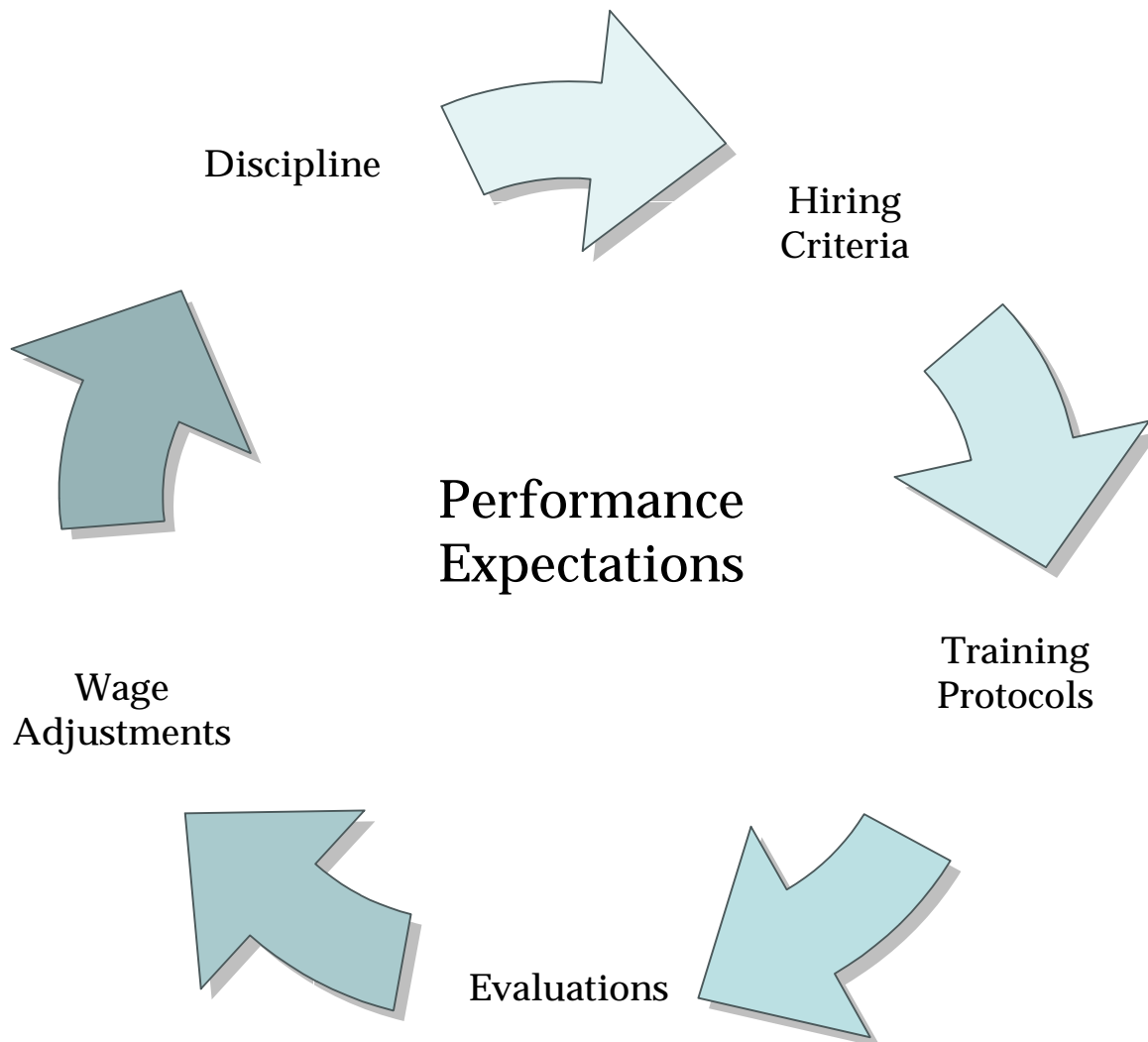
This approach is a non-cohesive, disorganized one that does not give our employees a clear view of what we expect of them with regards to their performance. Both the employee and organization are set up for failure.

The Linear Human Resource Approach



This is an improvement, because all things are relating back to the employee's performance expectations, so it is becoming more cohesive. But the problem exists that any problems in the process are still looked at as a problem not of the organization's, but rather, the employee's.

The Circular Human Resource Approach



This approach holds both the employee accountable to the organization's standards, and also holds the organization accountable to their own processes. It allows us to give clear evaluations, goals, and discipline to employees based on the expectations set. And if an employee fails, we can review the employee **AS WELL AS** the process to evaluate what could be changed to avoid future failure.

Cost of Turnover

Direct Costs

- Outplacement fees for outgoing employee (unpaid PTO, severance pay)
- Unemployment rate increases when paid too frequently
- Advertising fees (newspaper, journals, internet)
- Personality or skills testing
- Drug Testing
- Background Testing

Indirect Costs

Cost of Your Time

- Writing, placing advertisements
- Reviewing Applications
- Scheduling Interviews
- Interviews Applicants
- Orientation and training for the new hire

Lost Productivity

- Trainer's lost productivity
- Difference between new hires productivity and a veteran's productivity
- Your lost productivity due to follow-up needs with new employee
- Reduction in the team's production due to ineffective new flow

Hidden Costs

- New Employee's mistakes
- Lost sales and/or service opportunities
- Unemployment benefits
- Lost clients due to errors or new faces
- Reduction in referral business

It is estimated that the cost of turnover is easily one year's salary for every productive employee who leaves the practice. OUCH!!!

The intention behind outlining the cost of turnover is not meant for any manager to fear those costs and subsequently keep bad employees. The purpose is to instill a strong desire in managers to attract and hire the strongest candidates and give them the best possible opportunity to excel in our hospitals!

The Manager's Role in the Human Resource Department

- Screening and Hiring
- Development of Training Protocols
- Record Keeping
- Performance Evaluations
- Counseling and Conflict Resolution
- Discharging/Firing

The Hiring Process

A. When To Hire

1. Doctor : Staff Ratios

Practices overall have 3.5 staff members per doctor according to AAHA, the practices in the Well-Managed Practice (WMP) Study had 4.4, not including management:

1.3	Receptionists
1.4	CVT's
1.1	Assistants
0.6	Kennel
4.4	Total

Source: The 2008 Well-Managed Practice Study™

2. Hospital Flow

- i. Looking at the flow of appointments and the availability of support staff when they are needed is one of the most crucial indicators of the need of additional support staff.
- ii. Doctors should be doing doctor things
 1. Surgery
 2. Diagnosing
 3. Prescribing Medication
- iii. All else should be delegated to support staff whenever possible.

3. Doctor Productivity (2008 Well-Managed Practice Study™)

- i. WMP DVM annual productivity is \$553,000
- ii. WMP DVM's handle 3,407 transactions per year.

4. Payroll Percentages

- i. The WMP Study has practices spending 23.2% of income on staff payroll. This number does not include taxes (2%) or benefits (2%). The total staff expense for a WMP is 27.2%.
- ii. If you are spending less than that, consider these possibilities:
 1. Your staff is underpaid.
 2. Your benefits package is not competitive.
 3. You are understaffed.
- iii. If you are spending more than that, consider these possibilities:
 1. Your staff is not properly trained.
 2. Your staff is underutilized or not leveraged properly.
 3. Your income is too low.
 - a. Prices are set too low
 - b. Fees are not being captured
 4. You are overstaffed or not staffed properly at peak vs. slower times.

Screening and Hiring

The importance of your written materials in the screening and hiring process can not be overstated. This not only projects an image of organization but also gives great continuity to the hiring process. The documents that mean the most and that should be in order are:

- 1) Interview Outline Process
- 2) Job Descriptions
- 3) Training Manual
- 4) Employee Manual
- 5) Performance Evaluations

Consider where you will get the most response for advertising your position openings:

- 1) Veterinarians: AVMA Job Bank; Veterinary Economics; Veterinary Colleges; DVM Magazine; Careersniff.com; Veterinaryjobs.com; CE conferences.
- 2) Managers: VHMA.org; Careersniff.com; Veterinaryjobs.com; CE conferences, promote from within and train.
- 3) Technicians: Veterinary Technician Colleges; Wheretechsconnect.com ; Careersniff.com; Veterinaryjobs.com; GetVeterinaryTechnicianJobs.com; AnimalClinicJobs.com; VetMedTeam.com; VetTechRelief.com; CE conferences; Craig's List; newspaper.
- 4) Receptionists: CE conferences; Craig's List; Vetmedteam.com; CareerBuilder.com; Monster.com; word-of-mouth; job expos.
- 5) Animal Care Attendants: High school work programs; local colleges; Craig's List; newspaper; Monster.com; Careerbuilder.com; word-of-mouth; job expos.

But mostly, understand the importance of having a pool of applicants available at all times for unexpected openings. This means interviewing even when you are not looking for someone. The stress this relieves in the case that an opening does occur is worth the work you put forth.

As a starting point for creating a better interview process, decide what traits (both personality and otherwise) are most important for each job area in the hospital and come up with standard questions for each position. This will make it easier to compare applicants and give a definite structure to the interview itself.

The Interview Process

- A. Phone Interview (prescreening)
- B. Face-To-Face Interview
- C. Interview Evaluation
- D. Interview Follow Up
- E. Working Interview & Applicant Testing
- F. Overall Evaluation

A. Phone Interview

This is the time to screen out what is specifically required to even be considered for the interview process.

- ✓ Introduce yourself and thank them for applying.
- ✓ Let the applicant know you have reviewed his/her application and have a few questions you would like to ask.
 - Are you looking for full time or part time employment?
 - Our hours of operation are _____; do you have any commitments that may conflict with shifts that cover those time periods?
 - Are you available Saturdays and/or Sundays (if applicable)?
 - We are a Drug-Free Workplace and require background screening (if applicable), do you understand what is required of you in the case that you are hired?
 - Tell me why you applied for this position.
- ✓ Once you decide that the answers given support moving this applicant to a face-to-face interview, tell the applicant when you are doing interviews and give them a time that you are available. "I am interviewing this week, I have Thursday at 8:00am available, can we schedule your interview then?"

B. The Face-To-Face Interview

Section I – Enlist the Input of Others

We have all been fooled during interviews, what we thought was a gem turned out to be a just a rock, which has made us second guess our hiring ability and intuition. Receiving as much input as possible will help narrow the search and hopefully select a better caliber of candidates in your final selection process. Use the Applicant Screening Tool on your cd to start obtaining that input from your team. Encourage them to interact with candidates filling out applications and coming in for interviews. They will act differently towards them than they will towards you. Allow your team to share their experiences with you.

Section II - Introduction

- ✓ Welcome the Applicant
- ✓ Introduce yourself and state your title
- ✓ Let them know you will be taking notes during the interview.
- ✓ Small talk (try to break the ice)
 - Did you find the hospital without any problems?
 - Tell me a little bit about yourself.
 - Tell me about your pets at home.
 - What are their names? Ages?
 - How did you acquire them?

Section III - Data collection

Education Related Questions

- ✓ Tell me about your educational background.
- ✓ Why did you choose your major?
- ✓ What degrees or certificates have you received? (if not covered above)
- ✓ What course(s) did you enjoy the most that you took? Least?
- ✓ What attracts you to this industry? (If a new career move)

Work Experience Related Questions

- ✓ Discuss previous positions.
 - Verify title, dates employed, starting/ending wage.
 - What were your primary responsibilities? (If prior experience is specifically related, discuss technical skills in depth.)
 - What did you enjoy the most about that position? What did you enjoy the least?
 - Did you enjoy the people you worked with?
 - Who should I ask for when I call for an employment reference?
 - Tell me what you think that person will tell me about you. What will he/she say are your strengths? Weaknesses?
 - What were your reasons for leaving?
- ✓ Discuss any gaps in employment.
- ✓ In which position we just reviewed did you feel the most efficient? What would you contribute your efficiency in that position to?

Section IV – Behavioral Interviewing - Employers use the behavioral interview technique to evaluate a candidate's experiences and behaviors so they can determine the applicant's potential for success. The interviewer identifies job-related experiences, behaviors, knowledge, skills and abilities that the company has decided are desirable in a particular position. Always look for an internal consistency in the answers when going from generalities to specifics to get at the truth behind their initial answer. You may have to dig to get answers that are specific and meaningful, rather than answers that are general and vague, but the questions below do not lead to very vague answers as a starting point.

Problem-Solving Related Questions

- ✓ Describe a time when you anticipated potential problems and developed preventive measures to avoid the problem.
- ✓ Have you ever been caught unaware by a problem or obstacles that you had not foreseen? What happened?
- ✓ What was the most complex assignment you have ever had? What was your role in that assignment? What made the assignment difficult?
- ✓ Recall a time during your work experience when your supervisor or boss was unavailable and a problem arose. Describe the problem and how you handled the situation.
- ✓ Tell me about an important decision you have made, and how you came to that decision?
- ✓ Have you ever encountered conflict on the job? How did you handle the situation?
- ✓ What is your typical way of dealing with conflict? Give an example.
- ✓ Describe a situation in which you were able to use persuasion to successfully convince someone to see things your way.

Teamwork/Communication Related Questions

- ✓ What have you done in the past to contribute toward a teamwork environment?
- ✓ Tell me about a time when active listening skills really paid off for you.
- ✓ Who was the best boss you've ever had? Why?
- ✓ Who was the worst boss? Why?
- ✓ Give an example of a time when you worked with a co-worker who was not doing his/her share of the work. How did you handle the situation? Were you satisfied with the results?
- ✓ Describe a time when you had to compromise or guide others to a compromise.
- ✓ What challenges have occurred while you were coordinating work with other units, departments, and/or divisions?
- ✓ What kinds of communication situations cause you difficulty? Give an example.
- ✓ Keeping others informed of your progress/actions helps them feel comfortable. Tell your methods for keeping your supervisor advised of the status on projects.

Motivation Related Questions

- ✓ What type of rewards – both monetary and non-monetary rewards – are most meaningful to you?
- ✓ What aspect of your work life do you feel passionate about?
- ✓ What aspects of your career have not lived up to your expectations?
- ✓ Compare and contrast a time when you did work that was above your standards with a time when you did work that was below your standards.
- ✓ Describe a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty to get a job done.
- ✓ Describe a time when a supervisor's evaluation of your performance differed with your opinion of your performance. How did you handle the situation?
- ✓ How would you define "success" for someone in your chosen career?
- ✓ Tell us me about an important goal that you set in the past. Were you successful? Why?
- ✓ Give me examples of projects/tasks you started on your own.

Integrity

- ✓ On occasion we are confronted by dishonesty in the workplace. Tell about such an occurrence and how you handled it.
- ✓ Describe a time when you were asked to keep information confidential.

Planning/Organization Related Questions

- ✓ Give me an example of a project that best describes your organizational skills.
- ✓ How do you choose to prioritize when there are many things that need to be done during a time period?
- ✓ What do you do when your schedule is suddenly interrupted?
- ✓ Give me an example of an important goal that you had set in the past and tell me about your success or failure in reaching it.
- ✓ Developing and using a detailed procedure is often very important in a job. Tell me about a time when you needed to develop and use a detailed procedure to successfully complete a project.

Building Relationships

- ✓ Give a specific example of a time when you had to address an angry customer. What was the problem and what was the outcome? How would you assess your role in diffusing the situation?
- ✓ How do you go about establishing rapport with a customer? What have you done to gain their confidence? Give an example.
- ✓ It is very important to build good relationships at work but sometimes it doesn't always happen. If you can, tell me about a time when you were not able to build a successful relationship with a difficult person.
- ✓ Tell me about a time when you built rapport quickly with someone under difficult conditions.
- ✓ What, in your opinion, are the key ingredients in guiding and maintaining successful business relationships? Give examples of how you made these work for you.

Personality Related Questions

- ✓ What assets and strengths do you think helped you most in your previous jobs? What weaknesses were your biggest detriments?
- ✓ What strengths would your best boss say you had? What weaknesses?
- ✓ What strengths and weaknesses would your worst boss say you had?
- ✓ Do you feel that you are a detail-oriented person? In what ways?
- ✓ What type of person or personality do you feel you work best with? Worst?
- ✓ Sometimes we need to remain calm on the outside when dealing with problems even though we are really upset on the inside. Give an example of a time that this happened to you.

Leadership

- ✓ Have you ever been in a position where you had to lead a group of peers? How did you handle it?
- ✓ Give an example of your ability to build motivation in your co-workers, classmates, and even if on a volunteer committee.
- ✓ Have you ever had difficulty getting others to accept your ideas? What was your approach? Did it work?
- ✓ Describe a situation when you demonstrated initiative and took action without waiting for direction. What was the outcome?

Section V - Hospital/Position Information

- ✓ Overview of hospital
 - Number of years established
 - Veterinarians
 - Small animal/pocket pets, avian, exotic, reptile.
 - Number of team members and different positions utilized
 - Team culture and hospital philosophy
- ✓ Overview of available position(s)
 - Job title
 - Primary & secondary responsibilities
 - Personal qualities/characteristics of successful applicants
 - Introductory period (60 days)
 - Available shifts
 - Wage/salary information
 - Overview of training program

Section VI - Closing

- ✓ Thank the applicant for taking their time to interview for the position.
- ✓ Do you have any questions about the hospital or the position?
- ✓ Give applicant a time frame in which they can expect a phone call or a final decision.
- ✓ Take applicant on a quick tour of the hospital. (Use this tool if you are really interested in the applicant or if you rather, save this for the working interview step)
- ✓ Give applicant a business card, and ask them to call if they have any questions.
- ✓ Walk the applicant to the front door, tell them it was a pleasure to meet them, say goodbyes.

Section VII – Recording Information

- ✓ Complete the Interview Evaluation Form to record information and thoughts about the applicant.
- ✓ Conduct reference checks
 - Educational
 - Employment

C. Interview Follow-Up

After the phone and face-to-face interviews, the field of applicants should be narrowed. Those applicants who you are not interested in any longer should be called and thanked for their interest. Those who you would like to know more about should be called and have another appointment scheduled for the working interview and testing.

D. The Working Interview

The purpose of the working interview is two-fold:

- 1) We can see more personality of an applicant during a more extended period of time than we can during an interview, and this also takes away the fact that some people may interview well and others may not.
- 2) The process gives the staff who will be working with the new-hire the opportunity to have input on the hiring process. Once you have narrowed the playing field to worthy candidates, they can have the final say based on their performance during the working interview process.

The Working Interview Process:

- 1) Have the applicants arrive early. This gives you an opportunity to see if they look like they just rolled out of bed or are polished and also to see if they can get there on time.
- 2) Have the original interviewer greet them and introduce them around. Have one person ultimately responsible for the applicant during the process even though many will be involved.
- 3) Have a tour of the facility given if that was not done during the original interview.
- 4) Things to pay attention to:
 - a. Does the applicant ask intelligent questions or ask questions at all?
 - b. Does the applicant feel confident enough to try to assist when busy?
 - c. Does the applicant seem to blend well with the staff?

--OR--

 - a. Does the applicant talk about things other than the job?
 - b. Is the applicant more a wallflower than a “jump in and do” person?
 - c. Does the applicant seem to have different core values than your current team?
- 5) Once the working interview is over, have the interviewer touch base with the applicant once again and ask how the process went in privacy to give the applicant an opportunity to ask questions and to talk about any concerns.

E. Applicant Testing

- 1) Applicant Emotional Intelligence Testing is just as important as Book Smarts and may even get us farther in business and the team environment as well as with client services. Exactly what is Emotional Intelligence? The term encompasses the following five characteristics and abilities:
 - ❖ Self-awareness--knowing your emotions, recognizing feelings as they occur, and discriminating between them.
 - ❖ Mood management--handling feelings so they're relevant to the current situation and you react appropriately.
 - ❖ Self-motivation--"gathering up" your feelings and directing yourself towards a goal, despite self-doubt, inertia, and impulsiveness.
 - ❖ Empathy--recognizing feelings in others and tuning into their verbal and nonverbal cues.
 - ❖ Managing relationships--handling interpersonal interaction, conflict resolution, and negotiations.

EQ Testing can be done for free at the following site with results supplied immediately in a printed version:

http://discoveryhealth.queendom.com/questions/eiq_abridged_1.html

- 2) Applicant Aptitude Testing – This is something that can be developed from simple needs that you may outline in the screening process. Depending on the position, you may decide what areas of knowledge are important and develop a list of standard questions to again help you narrow down your applicant screening.

F. Overall Evaluation

As you had noticed some of the Interview Evaluation Form has areas that should be filled out after the working interview and applicant testing. At this time, those areas should be completed and the entire interview process and results should be compared between each candidate. Although we are trying to avoid a decision based solely on gut instinct, that may come into play in a close race. But keep in mind that these records will be kept and if a hiring discrimination suit was ever filed, these records could be reviewed.

Drug and Background Testing

1) Pre-employment drug testing is another way to ensure that the candidates we choose are up to the standards of our hospital expectations.

A. According to InfoLink Screening Services, 3.3% of applicants tested positive for drugs in 2005. Instituting a Drug-Free Workplace does not guarantee a perfect system, but it does give us yet another firm root hold on our new hires.

B. Realize that if you choose to be a Drug-Free Workplace (DFWP), all of your employment advertising needs to specify that you are such an establishment. It is recommended that it be on all printed items that have anything to do with your hiring process including newspaper ads, printed articles, flyers, internet ads, employment applications, etc.

2) Background testing gives us yet another means for testing the validity of our candidates. The nightmares of negligent hiring, negligent retention, or a wrongful termination suit are prompting some practices to do pre-employment screening – for good reason.

A. Infolink Screening Services statistics show that in 2005, 8.3% of all screened applicants had criminal records and 26.4% had discrepancies in previous employment reported. This screening allows us a chance to see into the past of the people we are considering for employment. Careful background checks can weed out applicants who can cause problems. This too is not a perfect system, but can prove helpful in screening out some potential problems.

B. Background testing is something that all candidates must agree to and sign off before the process takes place, it is therefore recommended that you have the first disclaimer on your employment application, and follow that with a signature release once the candidate is actually considered for employment. Things you may want to consider reviewing: education, employment history, military background, driving record, criminal litigation, and civil litigation. Consult an attorney about your plan and what information you should gather as well as how you plan to use it.

Job Descriptions

The primary objective of a Job Description is to help employees and supervisors reach a mutual understanding about important details of a position in order to avoid future problems. Job descriptions should never be considered final; they should be open to changes and should be reviewed at least once a year by both employee and supervisor. They are a continual work-in-progress.

Reasons For Job Descriptions

1. Organization. The job description helps people understand their responsibilities and how their work contributes to the overall mission of the business. In today's competitive labor market, veterinary hospitals need to communicate the image of a well-managed and organized business. Well-constructed job descriptions show that management is aware of specific labor needs and the qualifications and skills that a successful candidate will possess.
2. Training. It serves as a useful tool for training purposes because it lists the specific tasks that make up the job. Once a candidate is selected, the job description serves as a guide to the skills and knowledge that the new employee will need to perform the job. Those skills that the employee already possesses will be refined and applied in their position, while skills and knowledge that the employee lacks can be acquired through training and education.
3. Recruitment. Clear job descriptions promote an understanding between the employer and the prospective employee. You are more likely to hire the right person if both of you clearly understand the job. Job descriptions are an essential part of the employee-recruitment process. Job descriptions spell out the specific duties that are required of employees and help candidates to decide if the job will be a good fit for them. Job descriptions help the manager make effective selections. With the required qualifications and duties clearly specified in the job description, managers can more objectively select candidates based on their potential for job success rather than on personality traits or appearances.
4. Evaluation. Employer and employee can compare actual job performance to the expectations outlined in the job description. This helps you recognize a job well done or a need for retraining or discipline. While the job description may not be detailed in nature, the associated evaluation form should be. This allows a scale of grading to give proper recognition in an area where an employee truly excels, and at the same time allows for lower scores in areas where improvement is needed or focus should be maintained for continued improvement.
5. Legal. In the unfortunate event that you must terminate an employee for poor performance, the job description gives you the basis for defending your decision. It also gives us a level playing ground for having equal expectations for employees. Since some lawsuits are filed because of what is perceived as "unequal or unfair" treatment, the job descriptions will outline the different expectations in each position which may help clear any discrepancies in unfair treatment in a court setting.

Preparing Job Descriptions

Job descriptions are not difficult to write. The best way to get started is to write one for your own position. This will get you thinking about your responsibilities and outline what you think is important. This will also help you prepare for questions that your employees may have. Next, sit down with your employees and help them to begin writing their job own descriptions. Make sure an explanation is given as to the importance and relevance of creating and using job descriptions so the proper time and devotion is given to the project. Finally, you will need to review and make changes to the job descriptions as necessary with a management focus on the final product.

A good job description will include the following:

1. Job Title. The job title should accurately describe the job.
2. Summary. This is a concise definition of the jobs major responsibilities; a position overview.
3. Qualifications and Requirements. A description of any experience, training, education, etc should be listed here. It is also appropriate to note here the shift length required, weight lifting requirements, and other necessary physical and tactical traits necessary for proper performance of the job. This area may also have noted information about the typical work environment. Noise and smells are a factor in many animal hospitals and should not be ignored under this heading for example.
 - a. Consider the ADA here: If the physical and mental requirements are not listed in the job description there is a chance a discrimination claim may be made by an applicant who lacks certain functions necessary for the job. So be sure to outline the specific physical and mental characteristics necessary to fulfill the job expectations.
 - b. Special Requirements: driver's license, shift work, weekend call duty, frequent overtime, etc. should be listed here.
4. Salary Range. Allow a range here, but these numbers should be accurate. A good starting point in developing salary ranges for your jobs is to look at your current employees pay scales, then allow for the current years growth. These can be adjusted as needed and are not set in stone. The salary range can be left off the job description if you choose, however, if wage ranges are set for your positions, you are encouraged to include them.
5. Duties or Tasks. This is the list of all activities that the person will perform. The number of different duties depends on how specialized the workers' roles are within the hospital. It is important to add at the end of the list "other duties as assigned by supervisor" as a way of including those activities that are not routine or that may not have been added to job descriptions between revisions.

A good job description will not include the following:

1. Details of tasks. The details associated with tasks should be included in the training materials and evaluation process, but not in the job description.
2. Consequences. The consequences for tasks not performed well or up to hospital standards should be saved for the evaluation process and sometimes may also be listed in the employee manual.

Other tips in writing your own job descriptions:

1. Avoid gender-based language.
2. Distinguish between activities done on a daily basis and those done less frequently using words such as 'often' or 'occasionally'.
3. Gear the job description to one position only; don't use the same description for clearly different jobs.
4. Be current, accurate, and concise when possible. Review the job description each time it is used to ensure its accuracy.
5. Do not set aside the Job Descriptions once you complete this as a project. Continually review them. The veterinary field is ever-changing as are our individual offices. Make changes and keep them as dynamic as your hospital.

Prewritten Job descriptions have been included on your cd. Please do not assume that you can use them exactly as they are. Every hospital is different. What you have is a starting point with an across-the-board format in place. It should be easy to look through the ones given to begin your own thought processes and make any necessary changes to them to develop your own tailored job descriptions.

The Employee Manual

How many of us would try to operate a complex piece of equipment without guidelines on getting started? Probably none of us. An Employee Handbook operates upon the same premise. It's the "instruction manual" for employees and employers. It educates them on how to get started, what rules must be followed to promote safety and productivity, and what benefits and services are available. Properly communicating this information to employees provides needed structure, expectations, guidelines, and resources to make their employment positive and productive.

1) The purpose of the employee manual is to hold BOTH the employer AND the employee accountable to the standards

A. What Should Be Included

- i. Practice Mission Statement
- ii. Employment Policies
 1. Equal Employment Opportunity Policy
 2. Sexual Harassment Policy
 3. Discrimination Policy
 4. Anti-Nepotism Policy
 5. Complaint Policy
 6. Emergency Policy
- iii. Professional Ethics (see AVMA Ethics)
- iv. Organizational Chart (if one exists)
- v. Employment Status Outlined
 1. Pre-Employment Requirements
 2. Probationary Period of Employment
 3. Full-Time Employment
 4. Part-Time Employment
 5. Production Employees
 6. Temporary/Seasonal Employment
- vi. Hospital Standards
 1. Standards of Conduct
 2. Standards of Appearance
 3. Standards of Employment
- vii. Hospital Benefits
 1. Health
 2. Dental/Vision
 3. Retirement
 4. Life Insurance / Disability
 5. Uniforms
 6. Veterinary Benefits
 7. Time-Off Taken
 - a. Paid Time Off
 - i. Vacation Time
 - ii. Sick Time

- iii. Personal Time
 - iv. Grievance Time
 - b. Unpaid Time Off
 - i. Maternity Leave (FMLA if applies)
 - ii. Military Leave
 - iii. Jury Duty
 - viii. Compensation Policies
 - 1. Pay Days
 - 2. Pay Periods
 - 3. Overtime Policy
 - 4. Salary Calculations
 - 5. Work Evaluations
 - 6. Promotions
 - 7. Work Schedules and Breaks
 - 8. Record of Time Worked
 - 9. Salary Deductions
 - ix. Termination
 - 1. Misconduct outlines (grounds for immediate dismissal)
 - 2. Resignations
 - 3. Re-employment Rights
 - x. Disclaimers
 - 1. This is NOT to be interpreted as an employment contract.
 - 2. Florida is an At-Will Employment state and employees can be dismissed at the discretion of the company.
- B. What Should NOT Be Included
- i. Specific Pay Scales.
 - ii. Details included in other publications.
 - iii. Specific details – the manual is an overview.

A prewritten Employee Manual template is included on your accompanied cd. The blank areas should be filled in with your hospital's specific policies. The template allows for you to have a starting point and a format from which to start the writing process.

Training Programs

A. Making Day #1 Count

1. Just like our first impression with clients should have our focus and attention, so should our first impression of a new team member.
2. ORGANIZATION is the key – be prepared and ready.
3. Creation of a new employee packet.
4. Creation of a New Employee Welcome presentation.

B. Senior Staff Mentoring

1. Choosing the right team member to mentor a new employee is the second most important decision you will make relating to the new employees start with the company.
2. You are looking for someone who has been with the company for a long period of time and can answer most questions.
3. But most importantly, you are choosing a team member with the right attitude to bring the new team member up-to-speed.
4. The Senior Staff Mentor is not necessarily the person handling the training of the new team member, but they can be considered their training coordinator.

C. Rotation of Training Duties

1. Let's face it; training a new team member is exhausting! Explaining what you all day takes much more energy and focus than just doing it.
2. To avoid burn out and having the trainer avoid the trainee, develop a training rotation through several capable team members. This not only gives the new team member a view of different approaches to the same job, but also allows them a chance to get to know several fellow team members.
3. In the absence of a training manual, having daily goals for the trainer holds them more accountable to the training tasks and gives them something to focus on with an end result in mind.

D. Development of a Training Manual / Phase training

1. This is one of the most cumbersome jobs we can take on. While it is not difficult, there are MANY tasks to cover and many different levels of experience to consider.
2. Getting started is easy; forget the formality of the manual.
 - i. Start by creating a format for the pages.
 - ii. Then when you cover topics in meetings, just type the procedure onto the formatted page.
 - iii. Just add each page to a binder as you go.

3. Phase Training is a great resource for any hospital. Having the forethought to put together these forms will pay off in employee retention.

E. Staff Meetings

1. Keep them consistent, positive and productive.
2. Have an agenda each and every meeting.
3. Consider rotation of training topics to be presented by worthy team members.
4. Team building exercises. Keeping a “team” environment requires more than just hiring great people.
5. Video taping the meetings will allow those who can not attend or those newly hired to gain the advantage of the information missed in person.
6. Keep meeting minutes along with attendee records, this will hold employees accountable to results! This task can be delegated.

Performance Evaluations

- A. Creating Employee Performance Goals
 - i. This task is not difficult if your employee expectations are clear. Starting with well-written job descriptions is a must.
 - ii. Having veterinarians who fully leverage their team gives managers a clear map of performance expectations.
 - iii. Creating goals for employees who are not using their skills is frustrating for both managers and the team for those who are not leveraged.
- B. Employee Accountability
 - i. Handling employee accountability can not be approached informally, if it is to be expected, it is to be taken seriously.
 - ii. Specific goals need to be clearly communicated, preferably in writing. This way if employees are to be dismissed, held back from promotions, etc, there will be a trail of what they were lacking on which you based your decisions.
 - iii. Open communication is vital in the process of gaining employee accountability so employees do not find it easier to simply proceed without asking questions of their supervisor when necessary. We want them leveraged to make decisions, but consider what each person on your team considers “common sense”.
 - iv. Managers and doctors must have 100% buy-in to the accountability factor for its success to be certain. This means they are leading by example and are accountable for their own actions and performance.
- C. Performance-Based Pay
 - i. The performance review is the time to formally communicate to our employees how accountable they have proven to be.
 - ii. Based on the well-written job descriptions we started with and our performance goals for the employee, it should be simple to tell them how they are doing.
 - iii. Our evaluation forms can be very similar to our job descriptions, although they should have more attention to the details rather than broad categories.
 - iv. A simple point scale can be linked to Wage Scales taking ALL personal feelings out of the evaluation process. Sample wage scales are included on your cd.
 - v. Performance Evaluation Forms that support performance-based pay and employee accountability are included on your cd.
- D. Tying Raises to Evaluations
 - i. There is controversy surrounding whether or not to have the team’s wage adjustments directly associated with the performance evaluation. There is no right or wrong way to handle this decision, it is a personal decision and consistency is the key.
- E. The Meeting Itself
 - i. Schedule the meeting in advance
 - ii. Choose a private setting and avoid interruptions.

Performance Counseling

A. Conflict Resolution

- i. Look for trends, not minor issues.
- ii. Allow and encourage staff members to resolve issues on their own. But step in when that is not possible or when it has failed. Addressing issues in a timely manner is crucial to employee accountability. See Figure 1
- iii. Be fair, firm and friendly.
- iv. Understanding personality types and how to best deal with them will help your approach and outcome.
- v. Keep an open door and open lines of communication. A good manager is a sounding board for employees and can listen and give advice or guidance on many topics. We MUST be approachable.

B. Protocols for Harmony

- i. Develop a clearly stated purpose and plan.
- ii. Select employees who understand and agree on the practice's purpose.
- iii. Require the same core attributes of every employee. Disagreements most often arise from opposing goals and values.
- iv. Develop a code of conduct to provide objective measures of what behaviors are acceptable and what are not.

C. Discipline

- i. Gaining the authority to handle this task is part of writing your job description. The guidelines and limitations need to be outlined in the job duties.
- ii. Consistency is the key – favoritism is not tolerable.
- iii. Handling a “Bad Apple” Employee
 1. Park your frustration at the door, handle the situation professionally and directly.
 2. Directly tie the employee's behavior(s) to the hospital's core goals or standards.
 3. Do not describe the employee's problem as an “attitude problem”. This is subjective. Cite specific examples drawing the relationship between the negative behavior and productivity and morale.
 4. Offer resources, if available, that may help change the negative pattern.
 5. Give a clear guideline of how the employee is expected to improve the behavior to meet standards. Also give a timeline in which the change is expected to occur.

D. Documentation Requirements

- i. Verbal (which is documented in their file)
- ii. Written (which is documented in their file)
- iii. Three strikes you're out!
- iv. All written records need to have clear, concise accounting of the details of the infractions or discussions, including Date, people involved, witnesses, and discussions that took place.

Understand personality traits:

FACTORS:	EXPRESSIVE	DRIVER	AMIABLE	ANALYTICAL
How to Recognize:	They get excited.	They like their own way; decisive & strong viewpoints.	They like positive attention, to be helpful & to be regarded warmly.	They seek a lot of data, ask many questions, behave methodically & systematically.
Tends to Ask:	Who? (the personal dominant question)	What (the results oriented question.)	Why? (the personal non-goal question.)	How? (the technical analytical question.)
What They Dislike:	Boring explanations/wasting time with too many facts.	Someone wasting their time trying to decide for them.	Rejection, treated impersonally, uncaring & unfeeling attitudes.	making an error, being unprepared, spontaneity.
Reacts to Pressure and Tension By:	"Selling" their ideas or argumentative.	Taking charge taking more control.	Becoming silent, withdraws, introspective.	Seeking more data & information.
Best way to Deal With:	Get excited with them. Show emotion.	Let them be in charge.	Be supportive; show you care.	Provide lots of data & information.
Likes To Be Measured By:	Applause, feedback, recognition.	Results, Goal-oriented.	Friends, close relationships.	Activity & busyness that leads to results.
Must Be Allowed To:	Get ahead quickly. Likes challenges.	Get into a competitive situation. Likes to win.	Relax, feel, care, know you care.	make decisions at own pace, not cornered or pressured.
Will Improve With:	Recognition & some structure with which to reach the goal.	A position that requires cooperation with others.	A structure of goals & methods for achieving each goal.	Interpersonal and communication skills.
Likes to Save:	Effort they rely heavily on hunches, intuition, feelings.	Time. They like to be efficient, get things done now.	Relationships. Friendship means a lot to them.	Face. They hate to make an error, be wrong or get caught without enough info.
For Best Results:	Inspire them to bigger & better accomplishments.	Allow them freedom to do things their own way.	Care & provide detail, specific plans&activities to be accomplished.	Structure a framework or "track" to follow.

It is vital for managers to know and understand personality differences. Being able to blend people to maintain and support effective workplace relationships is a key factor to the successful manager.

Don't hire people all just like you.

Figure 1

What's the best thing your practice owner or manager could do to resolve staff conflict and improve teamwork?

1. Address personnel problems more quickly.
2. Improve team communication.
3. Educate themselves on how to deal with staff issues.
4. Hold more staff meetings.
5. Fire poor-performing team members sooner.

Source: VetMedTeam.com

By taking on your negative employee, you send the message to your team that you are a strong manager up to the task, and reinforce the positive contributions of your hardworking, positive staff.

Employee Retention

Employee Satisfaction should be our top priority – let's go over some of the best ways to promote it.

A. Workplace Atmosphere

- a. It has been estimated that up to 50 percent of workplaces in the country are overly stress-producing.
- b. Organizational culture is largely shaped by workplace traditions and senior management.
- c. Workplace atmosphere is affected negatively by such internal factors as:
 - i. inaccessibility of the ultimate decision makers
 - ii. their lack of consultation with workers in the "trenches"
 - iii. their inflexibility or incompetence
 - iv. their being out of touch with current realities or unaware of the personal needs of the workers
 - v. their failure to establish adequate personnel policies or to provide proper staffing for the organization
 - vi. The attitudes and behaviors of workers
 - vii. resistance to change or new ideas
 - viii. inadequate salary and lack of opportunity for advancement
 - ix. employee's not fitting in a job
 - x. Boredom
 - xi. Stress of finding a healthy balance between work and family
- d. What managers can do about correcting problems with "atmospheric conditions"
 - i. Don't ignore a problem person or situation

- ii. Be an ambassador for the hospital and team
- iii. Stay in the loop! Don't be desk-bound and lose touch with those in the trenches or the jobs we ask them to do

B. Employee Recognition

a. Public Praise

i. Give a compliment

- 1. Be specific
- 2. Be prompt
- 3. Do it in front of others
- 4. A simple "thank you goes a long way
- 5. Don't couple the compliment with criticism

ii. When Veterinary Economics polled staff members on what one thing they would change about their practice, the number one response was: "To appreciate the staff – The job is hard enough without feeling underappreciated."

- 1. Understand why and when mistakes are made
- 2. Know when to expect more and when to go to bat for your employees

b. Private Reprimand

- i. When you expect more from your employees, don't be afraid to tell them.
- ii. Ask them to put themselves in the shoes of your clients.
- iii. When you have had to sit down with an employee to discuss their performance lacking, be sure to document the discussion in their file.

C. Employee Motivation

a. Creating an motivational environment is based on three key factors:

- i. Creating Team Alignment
- ii. Understanding the Team's Needs
- iii. Creating a Sense of Purpose for each Team Member

b. Employee motivation is based on three key factors:

- i. If they give maximum effort, will it be reflected in the performance appraisal?
- ii. If they receive a good performance appraisal, will they be rewarded?
- iii. Are they receiving the rewards that are meaningful to them?

D. Benefits

a. Pay them fairly

b. Offer a competitive benefits package

- i. Health Insurance tiered to length of service
- ii. Dental Insurance
- iii. Vision Insurance
- iv. Section 125 Plans
 - 1. Pre-tax Medical Costs

- 2. Pre-tax Child Care
- v. Retirement Plan with matching contributions
- vi. Paid Time Off
 - 1. Vacation tiered to length of service
 - 2. Personal time (as opposed to sick time)
 - 3. Paid Holidays
- vii. Uniforms Provided
- viii. Veterinary Benefits For Personal Pets (visit www.vetecon.com , go to web exclusives, then “Benefits By The Book” By Gary Glassman for tax implications associated with offering discounted veterinary benefits to staff)
- ix. Food/Supplies discounted For Personal Pets
- x. Direct deposit paid
- xi. Life Insurance / Disability
- xii. Bonuses

E. Know what Makes Your Staff Happy and Unhappy

- a. See Figure 2
- b. Possibility for advancement
 - i. Professional – be creative
 - ii. Personal – quit smoking, diets, gym memberships, etc.
- c. While you may think you’re providing what employees want, its team members opinions that really count. Get their feedback.
 - i. Intermittent questionnaires
 - ii. Exit Interviews
 - iii. Open Communication

Figure 2

According to a VetMedTeam.com survey, here’s what benefits team members indicated that their position must offer for them to remain at the practice:

Vacation days.....	75%
Discount of medical care for pets.....	68%
Discount on food/supplies for pets.....	60%
Sick days.....	51%
CE allowance.....	40%
Partially paid health care.....	36%
Uniform allowance.....	31%
Retirement funding.....	31%
Personal days.....	29%
Fully paid health insurance.....	25%
Paid holidays.....	22%
Dental insurance.....	20%
Profit Sharing.....	11%

Source VetMedTeam.com 2006

Firing / Discharging

A. Legalities

1. At-Will Employment - The employment-at-will doctrine provides that both the employer and the employee can end the employment relationship at any time without notice or reason. This means we have the right to terminate the employee's employment at any time, for any reason, or for no reason at all or for a bad reason, so long as the reason is not illegal - even if the employee's performance has been outstanding. Know if your state is an At-Will Employment State.
2. Exceptions to the At-Will Employment Doctrine
 - i. When an employment contract is in place – unless the contract permits that you can be fired.
 - ii. When an employee manual does not have a disclaimer stating that it is NOT to be considered a contract.
 - iii. Federal employees have more protection against the At-Will employment doctrine.
 - iv. An employee may not be terminated for an illegal reason such as their race, sex, age, religion, nationality, or disability (discrimination of any kind).

B. A 3-step Standard System should be put into place for larger issues

1. Verbal Warning
 - i. This warning can be as simple as a sit down discussion. The bullet-pointed items that are not up to standard can be discussed with the employee.
 - ii. A timeline for expected improvement should be given.
 - iii. Even though it is a verbal discussion, your discussion should be typed or written, dated and placed in their employee file for documentation.
2. Written Warning
 - i. Whatever has not been corrected in the time period given in the verbal warning, should be included in the written warning.
 - ii. It is smart to “recap” the verbal warning in the written warning.
 - iii. Again give a specific timeline to correct the substandard performance.
3. Termination
 - i. If the problem was not corrected by the employee, the termination should take place on the date when the written warning stated the infraction should have been corrected. Do not wait for it to be convenient on your schedule.

C. All small problems should be handled verbally

1. This will keep lines of communication open and keep you understanding the challenges your team is facing.
2. Avoid micromanaging
3. Look for trends, not small, one-time issues (choose your battles)

D. Documentation Requirements

1. All disciplinary measures up until now should have been documented. But the actual discussion during the firing process should be witnessed whenever possible. Notes should be typed for the employee's file as soon as the conversation ends to ensure details are not forgotten.
2. Resignation – a voluntary termination of employment initiated by the employee. Resignations should always be confirmed in writing.

E. Exit Interviews

1. Exit interviews are very valuable to the whole HR process; they allow us to fully evaluate how we are doing and what changes need to be made.
2. They should be mailed or sent with the person with a stamped, self-addressed envelope. They will not be honest if people have to hand them to a member of management.
3. An Exit Interview Form is included on your cd

F. Unemployment Claims

1. Employees terminated during the first 90-day period are ineligible for unemployment in most states.
2. DO NOT keep a bad employee to avoid unemployment claims.